

Transcription: James Groesbeck

Today is June 19th, 2008. This interview, this is Bill O'Hara conducting the interview. I am interviewing Mr. James Groesbeck, and the spelling on the last name is Groesbeck, and Mr. Groesbeck is, lives in Austin. This interview is taking place by phone. I am in the Stephen F. Austin Building where the General Land Office is housed in Austin at 1700 Congress Ave., and Mr. Groesbeck like I said is at his home in Austin. The interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. All right Mr. Groesbeck, we'll get started with a few simple questions and then we'll just get talking. When is your birthday and where were you born?

James Groesbeck: I was born in El Paso, May 26th, 1921.

And your parent's names?

James Groesbeck: Were Mary Kate Groesbeck was my mother and John Douglas Groesbeck was my father.

Both Groesbeck's?

James Groesbeck: Oh yes, actually they were.

And where were they born?

James Groesbeck: My mother was born in Stephenville, Texas, I believe, and my father was born in Illinois. They were distant relatives.

I'm curious what brought your father to El Paso?

James Groesbeck: Business, he had a, had a business partner in Torreón, Mexico, and he ran the uh, American end of the business.

And which branch of service did you join?

James Groesbeck: The U.S. Navy.

OK, and what made you want to join the Navy? And how old were you when you joined?

James Groesbeck: Let's see, I had uh, graduated from the University of Texas, I'd completed the degree requirements that is in January of 1941. I was still 19 at the time. Pearl Harbor came along. I was working for Hughes Tool Company. They indicated that, that uh, they could guarantee several of us a six-month deferment from any military service, but couldn't foresee beyond that time period. They had some defense contracts and uh, I thought that uh, didn't like the idea of being, the possibility of being drafted, so I never, never registered for the draft but chose to volunteer for the Navy. I enlisted on a, on a Friday the 13th of 1942, and uh, as soon as I had been sworn in, they told me to go back to work. They didn't have a training facility available. So I didn't go on active duty until June or July of 1942.

So you graduated from college with a Bachelor's degree at the age of 19?

James Groesbeck: Yes.

That was great. And uh, University of Texas in Austin?

James Groesbeck: Yes.

And then you went to work for Hughes Tools? Was that Howard Hughes' company?

James Groesbeck: Yes it was. To my knowledge, I never saw Howard.

That was very interesting, very interesting. Well where were you when uh, Pearl Harbor was attacked?

James Groesbeck: I had actually uh, come up to uh, take a date to the uh, UT Longhorn football game with the University of Oregon on December 6th, and uh, stayed over, overnight, and uh, took her to uh, dinner. So the next Sunday, the next day on Sunday, December 7th, we saw the, the movie about the, uh, the World War I hero Sergeant York, and we came out and the news boys were hollering "Extra!," that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. And so that uh, that came as a shock.

What did you think about all that? Can you remember what you must have felt like when that happened?

James Groesbeck: Shock. I was certainly, certainly surprised.

And you hadn't enlisted yet at that point? It was the following summer?

James Groesbeck: No, I had not, had not considered it at that point. And it was subsequent to then that uh, Hughes Tool people told us, told several of us that they could get us deferments for six months, and I, I mulled it over and wanted to be sure I had a commission, so I volunteered in the Navy's Officer in Training program. My folks had once toyed with the idea of, of getting me a congressional appointment to the Naval Academy, but uh, we never, never really pursued it. So I did recall that before I went into the Navy.

So you had already considered the Navy before, before you went to college.

James Groesbeck: Well, I hadn't, my folks had.

OK, so in the summer you enlisted and you went into the Navy and where did you do your training at?

James Groesbeck: First spent a month as an apprentice seaman in the Officer Training Program at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, and then was transferred to midshipman school in New York City in an old, what had been an old battleship of Theodore Roosevelt's great white fleet. It had been converted into an armory for the New York State National Guard and then when the war started, the Navy had taken it over. I spent, I was one of the so-called 90-day wonders.

They gave you 90 days of training?

James Groesbeck: Yes, uh-huh.

So what ship were you on?

James Groesbeck: Well, I wasn't sent to a ship after we finished the training at the, it was on the U.S.S. *Prairie State*. After we finished our training, I was commissioned in October, I was sent to the amphibious force of the Atlantic fleet and went through uh, they have a gun class support training at uh, Norfolk, Virginia, and uh, that involved learning about amphibious warfare and went through uh, besides the naval aspect of it, the naval gunnery, how to control naval gunfire and what the ranges of the various naval guns were and maximum ordinance, what kind of hills you could shoot uh, you could shoot over, and uh, I was sent to the 189th Field Artillery Battalion of the Oklahoma National Guard that's, had been activated as the 45th Division, and uh, went through amphibious training from the land standpoint with, with that uh, Army battalion, and then returned to Norfolk and waited, and we, there were several of us that grew restless because we'd go to the officer's club and be mingling with officers who had been out on convoy duty fighting submarines and searching for submarines, and we were just standing by doing, doing nothing, and finally uh, we let it be known that we were on the bored side and uh, so somewhat later, we were told that there was a mission available that would guarantee some combat, but it was strictly a volunteer undertaking, and uh, 8 out of the 27 volunteered. And of course we weren't told what it, what it was, we were just told we were volunteering for a special mission. And it turned out that they sent us down to the Army's parachute school at Fort Benning in Georgia, and uh, we spent a week there learning about parachute jumping, and including one night jump. And then we were sent back to Norfolk, and we waited a little bit, but they then sent us up to New York City to catch a flying boat, uh, because the surface convoys were going to take 7 to 10 days to get over to where they wanted us to be, which was in North Africa, and uh, the flying boats were, were a surprise to me. I didn't know they had them. They were like the old PanAm Yankee clippers I guess that had operated before the war, but these were American export, uh, shipping company subsidiary, and they were very luxurious, nicest way to travel imaginable, and we, unfortunately they couldn't take off because of the weather, so we spent three days waiting for the weather to clear, and we enjoyed New York City. But we were kind of looked down as we were four of us who looked very healthy and suntanned from the Georgia sunshine, and everybody, young men who were in civilian clothes, we had to be in civilian clothes for this travel, and at that time, the military was required to wear uniforms at all times, so we were, we were looked uh, looked at very curiously, and contemptuously by some. But at any rate, and we had no civilian clothes, so they sent us down to a charitable organization, uh, called Bundles for Britain where Americans had contributed old and used clothing to be sent to England which was under aerial bombardment by Hitler, and their manufacturing industries were in trouble, so the Americans were trying to help out. So we wound up wearing some clothing that had been contributed to that cause, and we finally took off. The plane was, went out of La Guardia. It was not an amphibious plane. It was purely a flying boat, but it was a commercial thing and had young American women as stewardesses, and they were like the old-fashioned Pullman cars. They had upper and lower bunks, and uh, in the daytime, made up the seats that could face like the old Pullman cars with a drop leaf table in between so people could play cards and that sort of thing, and eat. They served meals on these drop leaf tables. So it was a very luxurious way of travel, and it was certainly to me. We flew up to Goose Bay Labrador and then uh, then over to Ireland which was a neutral country, and was not involved in World War II, and in fact the Germans had a diplomatic representation there, so we, that's why we had to wear civilian clothes. We couldn't be identified as military or we'd be subject to internment. But going through the Irish immigration was kind of interesting. We had special passports that

identified us as government officials going abroad on official business, and uh, the uh, I remember the immigration officer looking at me and saying, well what agency do you work for? And since the state department had issued me the passport, I said state department. He said well what do you do in the state department? I said whatever, whatever they tell me. And he, he grinned, because he knew full well what was going on but stamped, stamped the passport, and on we went. Then the flying boat couldn't take off and we landed on the river Shannon in Ireland, and uh, we got weathered in there. We had an opportunity to go and do a little sightseeing, and we got to kiss the Blarney Stone while we were waiting for the weather to clear. It finally cleared and they flew us down to Casablanca and then over to Algiers. And then I reported to the uh, staff of the naval command there in Algiers.

I have a question about the airplane you were on, the flying boat.

James Groesbeck: Yes.

That was a civilian aircraft?

James Groesbeck: Yes it was, it was a commercial aircraft. The uh, operated by uh, American Export Airline which was a subsidiary of the shipping company American Export lines, and uh, they had the Defense Department contract, but the, the crew was civilian.

Were there any other passengers on there that were civilian?

James Groesbeck: Yes, there were four of us, and there was a full load of uh, of people including to the Ireland, the U.S. Ambassador designate, a man named Gray and his wife were going, he was going to be the uh, chief diplomat, American diplomatic officer in Ireland, and uh, one, a semi celebrity which was going the same, same place we were, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., movie actor, and uh, some other, some other people, too, whose names I don't recall. But it was a very interesting experience.

It sounds like it. You got to see a lot of sights on your way to North Africa.

James Groesbeck: Yes. The, well I don't know, we did, that got, got me to Algiers anyhow, reported to the naval staff there.

And then where did you go from there?

James Groesbeck: Well uh, the, what they had wanted, the reason they wanted these parachute trained naval officers was to jump with the 82nd Airborne Division into the, onto the island of Sicily and the invasion of Sicily, which took place in early July of 1943. But when we got there, there were four of us, and the Army just wanted two, so I was uh, not one of the two selected, and the uh, staff gunnery officer kept me as an assistant because I did have a special training. They thought it would be good to have somebody who knew what that was about available for, for information. So I wound up as an assistant to the uh, staff gunnery officer of the naval, of the U.S. Naval Command in the Mediterranean, and then after the Sicilian operation, uh, the naval, well the whole Allied Force headquarters ____ over to uh, Italy, and uh, they set up the Allied Force headquarters at a palace called Caserta, and the naval headquarters stayed in, in the city of Naples. So then in Naples we had our choice. We could live aboard the flagship, uh, but there were six of us in a bunkroom or we could move ashore, so we moved, we chose to move ashore where we thought we'd have more room, and something else interesting. The Army was in

charge of billeting, and they, they happened to put us up in the what had been a bordello before the Army had taken it over, and that was very, actually we were very lucky because it was a much better furnished and, and uh, much more comfortable than uh, than most of the quarters available were, except that uh, there were a few people that didn't have the word and didn't realize it was not open for business, and so we had to contend with that a little bit. It's not the typical tale of a naval officer.

Nothing you've said so far is what I would, you know, see as a typical tale of a naval officer. You had paratrooper training it sounds like, or jump school, or protocol, and artillery training, and uh, so you took a little different path than a lot of folks in the Navy.

James Groesbeck: Yes, it was very different, and uh, I stayed with the staff in the invasion of southern France, and I was aboard the flagship the U.S.S. Katockin, which was a command and control ship, and we did suffer an air attack, but where a lone intruder came in under the radar screen and uh, fortunately for the ship, dropped a fragmentation bomb instead of an armor pressing bomb which would have sunk the ship because they made a direct hit, and did inflict personnel casualties, but did no structural damage to the ship. So I was aboard her during, during the operation, and then later went as a staff observer to observe some mine sweeping operations, and uh, some 30 odd uh, contact mines. They cut the cable and secured them at the bottom and the mine would float to the surface, and then they'd sink 'em by rifle fire with holes in them so the mine would sink to the bottom and not be a threat anymore. So that was an interesting experience.

Would that cause the mines to blow up?

James Groesbeck: No.

No, it just sunk 'em.

James Groesbeck: There was a remote possibility that if you hit one of the horns on the mine with the rifle flare it might explode, but it did, but for the most part it let water in and the water would cause the mine to sink to the bottom where it was harmless, and it was apparently a mistake though because we were as I say, there were two of us, we were staff observers of the operation. When they got through and sunk the 30 odd mines, the mine sweepers were turning around to leave the harbor and one of them backed into a mine that had not been, that had been missed, and so they had some casualties on that occasion, but uh, otherwise the operation had gone very smoothly. But it was an interesting experience to see another aspect of warfare. And one other thing while I was still as the staff observer, flew in the old PVY aircraft, uh, that could fly over the water was very clear off the coast of southern France, and it could chart the mine fields because it could from the airplane, a slow flying airplane, you could see the mines down below the surface, and that would, that helped the mine sweepers to be able to do that. It was interesting.

Yeah. Well how would you compare the American equipment to what you saw of the enemy's equipment?

James Groesbeck: Would you repeat that?

I'm sorry, how would you compare the American equipment, you know, the boats and the planes and all the things that you used and were exposed to, to the enemy's equipment and their weaponry, etc.?

James Groesbeck: Well, the uh, Germans had an 88 millimeter gun on their tanks and uh, in the Sicilian operation I did see a couple of things. One of the first things was from a ridge looking down on the valley where there was a crossroads, the uh, the Navy cruiser Boise was laying down a barrage on the crossroads, and there was a tank followed by, oh I don't know how many there were, 20 to 30 soldiers, probably Italian, on bicycles. And they went right into the, where the barrage was and the tank came out the other side but none of the bicyclers did, and the uh, the 88 millimeter gun was more powerful than what we had ashore at the time. They had, what we had 75 millimeter half-tracks, which were just partially armored and were no match for the German tanks, and the Germans did uh, behind our position, uh, manage to break through and get down, the German tanks got down to the beach, but the Boise was able to take 'em under direct fire and uh, destroyed the tanks. So once they got up against the direct fire, the naval 6-inch gun, the tank was vulnerable. So I don't know whether that really answers your question or not.

No it does. That's very interesting. What about the American servicemen, this almost seems like a funny question asking it, but the American servicemen versus the soldiers or the seamen of say the German military or even the Italians – well those were the ones you saw I guess.

James Groesbeck: They really weren't interested in fighting, and they surrendered very quickly and easily. The Germans were a different story and uh, the unit that I was with attached to in the Sicilian landing was a unit of the uh, 1st Infantry Division of the big red one, and they were veterans of the Tunisian campaign in North Africa, and I think they would compare with anybody, would compare favorably. But uh, I wasn't really an authority on land warfare. I was a newcomer and that's the impression that I got.

So where did you go from there? I guess this was in the Mediterranean where the – this is the Italian front.

James Groesbeck: We uh, after the southern France thing, we went back to Naples and stayed, stayed there until after the uh, the German surrender, and uh, I was redeployed in 1945 I guess it was back to the States and given a 30-day leave before I expected to be assigned to the Pacific, but uh, while I was on leave, well the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, so I didn't get to the Pacific, and I wanted to stay in the Navy rather than return to my civilian work, so I applied for conversion to regular Navy and they assigned me to the battleship Wisconsin, which was then operating down, training down in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, and I flew down and joined the Wisconsin there. But she was just finishing up and went back to, to Norfolk, so I didn't get very much orthodox naval training then either. And uh, the Wisconsin went into the shipyard and was gonna be there for three months, and during that period, I received orders to, it was in the shipyard in Norfolk back to the amphibious force to help organize and be an instructor at a naval gunfire support school that they wanted to have that specialty. And I protested because I needed to get the sea duty, uh, and get some, get some regular real naval experience, and my executive officer went to bat for me and twice called Washington to try to get my orders changed, but they told him that the needs of the service prevailed over the needs of the individual, so I went back ashore to help organize a naval gunfire support school for the Atlantic fleet in Little Creek, Virginia, right outside Norfolk, and was there a couple of years. When I finished that tour, I was ordered to the uh, heavy cruiser U.S.S. Albany and I spent a couple of

years aboard her, and from there, was ordered an operations officer to a radar picket destroyer, the U.S.S. Benner, and I spent two, a couple of years aboard her. And uh, it was during that time that the Korean War started, but we were over in the Mediterranean so I didn't really participate in that, in that war because I was in the Atlantic fleet and we went back and forth to what was called the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean. We'd go over for six months and then come back and train.

So you were in the Navy during the Korean War, but you never got over to that part of the world.

James Groesbeck: Well, I did eventually. After the uh, the Benner, let's see, I was ordered to the post graduate school in Monterrey, California, and from there down to San Diego where I went aboard a general purpose destroyer as an executive officer and navigator, and we operated with the 7th Fleet over in the western Pacific, and got into places like Hong Kong and Ukusku, Japan and Sasebo, Japan and so on. That was finally I was getting the kind of experience I should have been having from the beginning.

What rank were you by then?

James Groesbeck: I was a lieutenant commander by then and uh, as a second in command of the laws. From there, I was let's see, at some point I went to the, back to the Monterrey to the Navy post graduate school in management, and then commanded the uh, U.S.S. Wiseman, the destroyer ascot and worked with the uh, Australian Navy and the combined actually, it was a combined training operation. We joined 'em in, on the east coast of Australia and went up inside the Great Barrier Reef with ships from, the Australians were in command. It was a British cruiser, an Indian cruiser. It was a Pakistanian frigate, and uh, four U.S. destroyer types, and two Australian aircraft carriers, so it was an interesting group under the Australian command. We also worked with a submarine, an American submarine because it was doing anti-submarine warfare training and it was an interesting experience, and wound up in Hong Kong at the time.

Well you saw a lot of the world.

James Groesbeck: Yes, and then back to, back to the Philippines. It was kind of interesting. We were uh, standing into the port of Hong Kong at one point when from this combined operation and uh, our division commander just sent us a visual signal, it was at night, to follow, just said follow me. And he turned around and went back to the, headed back to the Philippines instead of going in to Hong Kong, and what we learned was that the uh, the reason for that was that the British and, and the Israeli and French had uh, launched an invasion of Egypt, and the United States wanted no part of it, and but put pressure, but we were under British command at that point so they took us away and sent us back to the Philippines under American command. So that was kind of an interesting experience, too.

Yup, and what year was that?

James Groesbeck: Oh gosh, uh, that would've been the 1950s, some -

Was this after the Korean conflict was over?

James Groesbeck: Yes.

OK, so mid, late 50s. And according to the sheet I have, it says that you uh, your military service ran until 1964? Is that right?

James Groesbeck: Yes.

So you had 22 years in the Navy, so you had some time during the Vietnam War as well.

James Groesbeck: Well, barely, I was uh, at that time assigned to the uh, let's see, I guess I was still on the Wiseman when some of the Vietnam War began, and the saw a Vietnamese ship that we had given them in the Philippines, but had no real experience in the Vietnam War. And uh, did, was assigned to Hawaii for a little over three years, and starting in, uh, in 19-, the summer of 1960, uh, went to the Pacific Barrier Force, as surface operations officer. At that time, there was still fear of Russian long-range bomber called the Bison. It had the capacity to take off from a Russian air base and hit the West Coast, but couldn't return. It would have had to have landed in Mexico or possibly Cuba, but so we because of that threat, we had an airborne, uh, airborne early warning aircraft patrolling from Midway Island up to Radar Landfalls on the Aleutians, and we stationed some destroyer escorts on the way to provide a surface screen, too, and they uh, so I was a staff officer in Hawaii in charge of the surface operations that supported the Pacific Barrier Force. And then finally after in 1963, was ordered to Washington and spent the last year of active duty in Washington. It was kind of interesting. Our kids were, we had three children by then, and uh, they were two of them had been born when we were in Key West, which I guess I didn't mention, at the Fleet Sonar School from 1957 to '59, and they uh, when our kids had been born, two of our kids that were born there and we had one born in San Diego earlier when I was in the __, but when we went back to Washington from Hawaii in September, the kids had to learn to wear shoes.

No need to wear shoes in Hawaii?

James Groesbeck: No. That was a very nice experience. We enjoyed Hawaii very much.

I'll bet. I just went to Hawaii a couple of weeks ago. I went to Maui for six days.

James Groesbeck: Oh, I know that was fun.

Oh, it was fabulous, yeah. So where were you stationed in Hawaii?

James Groesbeck: On Oahu at Barber's Point. They had a naval air station there at that time that these airborne early warning, that was their home base, and then when they went out on patrol, they'd fly from Barber's Point out to Midway Island, and then the operations would go on from Midway to uh, Radar Landfall on one of the Aleutian Islands and turn around and go back. It was a long, made for a long flight. I made it a couple of times for ____ization purposes. But uh, being based in Hawaii was fun. My wife and I both went to graduate school at night there and picked up Masters Degrees at the University of Hawaii while we were out there, so it was, we really enjoyed Hawaii.

I bet. A good friend of mine, um, see I'm 50 years old and he's about 49, and his dad, my dad was in the Air Force and his dad was in the Air Force. Of course I never lived in Hawaii, but he did. He went to high school in Hawaii and he loved it there so he went to high school in the 1970s and loved it. I think he was at is it Hickham Air Force Base there?

James Groesbeck: Yes, we were right across from Pearl, the Pearl Harbor entrance channel from Hickham, and at one time they uh, they had the B-36 aircraft with the heavy bomber based at Hickham, and uh, they would take off and fly over our housing unit. We had uh, the Navy had put in housing at Iroquois Point which was just on the other side of the Pearl Harbor channel from Hickham. So they, those great bombers were fighting for altitude as they went over our housing, and if one of them had ever had an accident which they never did, it would've just plowed through an awful lot of housing, but it never happened.

Well thank God for that. When I was, when my father was in the Air Force, this was during the Vietnam era, he was a boom operator on a KC-135, and we lived on the SAC base up on Massachusetts, at Strategic Air Command, and he used to like to go -

James Groesbeck: You were on a SAC base where?

At Westover Air Force Base in Chigoby, Massachusetts.

James Groesbeck: Uh-huh.

That's where we, we were there for a long time and my dad retired from the Air Force in 1973 I think it was.

James Groesbeck: Oh well, can't say we were almost contemporaries, but had our time in '64, but uh -

Well he went in to the Air Force during the Korean War, it was right near the end of it, and he went over as a gunner on a, I forget what kind of aircraft it was, it was one of those they had the belly turret, he was a gunner on one of those aircraft.

James Groesbeck: Oh, that's interesting.

But they, the war ended by the time he got there, so he didn't really see any action, and then I think they decommissioned the airplane and so that's how he went into being a boom operator, and uh, but he used to like to go and he would take, he would take me and my younger brother over to where the, where the planes would take off and we'd go to the end of the runway. So they'd come running down this runway and they'd just be gaining altitude when they went right over our head. There was a road there and we'd park and just pull off the side of the road. He loved to do that. I don't know if you've ever done that, but it was quite an experience to see these big, and we had the B-52's and the C-140's and all those big planes would fly right over us. It looked like you could almost reach up and touch them.

James Groesbeck: Well that's interesting. I almost had a little bit of feel for it from our experience.

That's what reminded me of that story. Let me ask you, I want to back up just a little bit and ask you about when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, you were state side then when that happened?

James Groesbeck: Yes, I was state side and on leave, on a 30-day leave, and was expecting when I reported back to be sent to the Pacific, probably to Okinawa, but uh, when they, when the bombs were dropped, that changed the picture and instead I was sent to naval school, the

gunnery officer's ____ school in Washington actually on Agostia, and then from there, to a ship that was the Wisconsin.

What were your thoughts when it was announced that those bombs were dropped?

James Groesbeck: Well, uh, I had no particular, I didn't care for the Japanese, and so I had no regrets. I thought it was great because I thought Harry Truman was saving a lot of American lives by doing that, and those were my thoughts at the time, and I don't know how I feel knowing what I know now, but uh, I didn't, later when I was in the destroyer laws, I had an opportunity to visit, I think it was Hiroshima, and the Japanese had kept it as a reminder of the horrors of nuclear war. They just did not try to rebuild it at all, but they just left the ruins, and boy, it was a devastated place. It did give you an idea of the power of those things. While we were in Hawaii, because I was in the Barrier Force that provided that early warning and so on, needed to keep an area clear, uh, I knew when the last airburst tests of the nuclear warheads were going to take place and I got our kids up and, and the explosion was, I don't know, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, but the uh, and we were some 400 miles away, but the whole sky lit up when the bomb uh, went off, from 400 miles.

That's amazing.

James Groesbeck: It was something. I'm glad, I'm glad we stopped that kind of thing.

Me, too. I hope it stays stopped for everybody's sake. Let's see here, oh, I wanted to ask you, so you get out of the service or out of the Navy in 1964, and you were in Washington?

James Groesbeck: Yes.

...DC at the time, and so, where did you go from there?

James Groesbeck: Went back to uh, to here to Austin to go to graduate school at UT, and offered me a what they call a university fellowship for a year and came back and uh, went to graduate school and then later, one of my professors of the 1930s had been teaching a course out at Huston-Tillotson College, and she wanted to retire. She'd reached the age where she didn't want to teach anymore, and she asked me to take her place out there, so I did and I wound up teaching full time out there.

At Huston-Tillotson?

James Groesbeck: Yes, uh-huh.

And how long did you do that for?

James Groesbeck: Oh, 20 odd years. I think I finally retired in 1992, and my wife had been studying. She got another Masters Degree at UT, taking evening classes and so on, working during the day.

So you had a Masters Degree from University of Hawaii? Is that where you went?

James Groesbeck: No, a Bachelor's from UT, Longhorn, and at 19, and then a Masters Degree in Business Administration from University of Hawaii.

And then when you came back to Austin and went to UT for graduate school, did you earn your PhD then?

James Groesbeck: No, I never did.

You got another Masters Degree?

James Groesbeck: I got it uh, all kinds of information actually. You may recall the State Industrial Accident Board which is no longer in existence, uh, and workers', had to do with workers' compensation, and uh, I did a lot of research and gathered a lot of data, but I never did get a, I wound up at Huston-Tillotson, and uh, they wanted me to teach more and more and my kids were growing up, and I was lazy and didn't ever organize all my data and put it into a dissertation. But it was kind of interesting. Somebody knew about the research and data that I had and they paid my way up to Dallas to testify to some subcommittee of the Congress. I've forgotten what it was, but uh, I gave some testimony on that occasion about my research. And then somebody in the legislature asked me for the data, but I was snowed under with Huston-Tillotson, and I think Christmas was coming and we had four kids by that time, so I didn't get around to helping them out as I should have.

What did you teach at Huston-Tillotson?

James Groesbeck: Economics basically, and then at some point I taught to some finance, primarily economics, different aspects of it.

Very interesting. And you retired some time around 1988 from that.

James Groesbeck: 1992. I phased out kind of. I started a full load, and then I cut it down and then one year and then the next year I cut it down some more, and then retired.

So in retirement what have you done? Did you take up golf or something like that? Travel?

James Groesbeck: Oh, we, well my wife and I have traveled. We can't anymore. We've both got mobility problems, but we did get in a nice one of those package tours which was three or four weeks to Europe, and we made it out to Hawaii on several occasions and spent I guess four out of the last six anniversaries out at the Halicor Hotel that the military operates in Oahu and Waikiki, and uh, then separately we made our, our youngest daughter became an Army wife and her husband was stationed at the Army command in Heidelberg and we visited them there and traveled down into Italy and saw some interesting things.

Did you get back to some of the places in Italy that you had visited while you were stationed over there during the WWII days?

James Groesbeck: Well actually not very much. After the German surrender, another guy and I had gone up and visited Venice, and uh, also had gone over to Pisa and climbed the leaning Tower of Pisa, and then in later years when my wife and I went back, we did get to Pisa and Venice and enjoyed our stay in Venice a lot.

Very interesting. Well you've had an interesting life. Let me ask you this. I'm sure you must be a big Longhorn fan.

James Groesbeck: Oh yes.

Do you have football games, basketball games, or - ?

James Groesbeck: I used to go to both, to both, but uh, but not anymore.

Not as easy to get around now it sounds like, for you.

James Groesbeck: No, it isn't, and of course to get seats, you practically have to remember the foundation for a long period of years.

I know, it is hard to get into these ball games, especially when their teams are doing so well.

James Groesbeck: Right, but it's been fun to see 'em do so well under Mike Brown.

Yeah, they've had a phenomenal run here under Mack. Hopefully they'll keep it going.

James Groesbeck: And the of course Bobby Gorita I guess has been the greatest collegiate baseball coach that we've had at least in terms of number of wins.

Yeah, he's a heck of a baseball coach.

James Groesbeck: And Barnes at basketball has done a great job, too.

And you know, the UT swim team is, that coach, I can't think of his name right now, he's one of the winningest coaches of any collegiate sport. I don't know if you know that but the UT swim team is always good.

James Groesbeck: Well, there was ____ at one time. I think they, Stanford I think may have lured him away, but so I don't know who the coach is now, but uh, it could be, it might be Eddie Reese.

Eddie Reese, that's the guy I was thinking of. My kids were involved in swimming for a while and not at the UT level, but um, you know, in uh, oh, in some Austin area leagues and then when they were getting into high school, and so you know, I was paying attention to swimming and UT swimming at the time. It's been a few years ago now. But Eddie Reese was a, you know, a very good coach. He coached a lot of Olympians as well, some good teams.

James Groesbeck: They have a great history there. And of course in golf, we have Tom Kite and Crenshaw.

Yeah, that's right. No slackers there either. I think from an athletic standpoint, UT can stand real tall with just about any other school in the nation.

James Groesbeck: Yes, I think for a while it seems to me I saw some rankings at the UT, Stanford and Ohio State and Michigan were always in the top 10.

And academically they're no slouches either.

James Groesbeck: Yes.

It's a good school all the way around. My son who just graduated from high school was accepted to UT. He chose to go elsewhere unfortunately. He wanted to get away from home. So he's gonna go to school back East up in Pennsylvania, but he had a nice offer from UT Austin into the Plan 2 program, and they gave him an 85% scholarship and he wouldn't have had to worry about work in his whole time in college, but he's taking a different route, so –

James Groesbeck: Well, they have to go their own way.

That's true.

James Groesbeck: All four of our kids did graduate from UT and one of 'em, let's see, two of 'em were in the Plan 2 program and liked it very much.

Very good. Well Mr. Groesbeck, I think I don't have any more questions. If there's something else you'd like to add, I invite you to do so before we –

James Groesbeck: Well, that's nice of you. I can't think of anything to add. I may have given you a lot more than you really wanted.

No, you covered all the bases and I learned a lot about you and your experiences and your family. It's been a real pleasure talking to you.

James Groesbeck: Well thanks, you've been awfully nice to be so patient.

Well on behalf of the Land Commission or Jerry Patterson, and the Texas Veterans Land Board, I want to thank you for your service to our country and for spending the time to share your experiences with me over the phone, so we can make this available to the rest of the public. When I finish here, I'm gonna take a recording. You know, I've been recording this whole conversation. I'll take this up to James Crabtree who you talked to, who is kind of in charge of this thing and he's gonna, he'll start to, he'll take the conversation that's been recorded in a digital format, he'll do whatever kind of magic he works with the computer, you know, to get it onto a CD and I think they transcribe it also so it'll be in a text format so you can read it as well.

James Groesbeck: That's great, because I'm not real sharp with the technology.

Well, I'll bet one of your kids or do you have any grandkids?

James Groesbeck: Uh, 12.

12. Good for you. Well, I'll bet the grandkids can figure it out if not the, if not your children.

James Groesbeck: They could, but you got to catch 'em first.

That's true, they move pretty fast. They're busy. Well Mr. Groesbeck, thanks again very much and –

James Groesbeck: Your welcome Bill and I've enjoyed talking to you.

Likewise. You take care now.

James Groesbeck: I hope I've done what you were looking for.

It was perfect.

James Groesbeck: Great.

It was perfect and you'll get a copy soon I'm sure and then you can judge for yourself, but I think we've covered a lot of ground here in just about the right amount of time.

James Groesbeck: OK.

All right. Bye now.

James Groesbeck: Goodbye.

[End of recording]